



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF GENERAL SURGEONS L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES CHIRURGIENS GÉNÉRAUX

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Dear Colleagues and Fellow CAGS Members,

I vividly remember the call when I was first approached to be CAGS President. There was an excessively long pause as I wondered whether I heard it right and questioned if I was called by mistake. Then I reassured myself...no, it must have been intended for me because it takes a certain amount of concentration to dial my number to discuss my upcoming roles and responsibilities...at some point during the conversation Debrah Wirtzfeld would have realized she meant to call someone else.

Immediately I looked up a formidable list of very accomplished past presidents. This was quite a humbling moment: each of them had their own defining qualities and a unique vision. Through leadership and inspiration, they shaped our understanding and practice of surgery with innovations in research, advocacy, education, excellence in clinical care. It is what CAGS represents and what CAGS is.

Maybe what struck me most about this list was how I knew many of them personally and many had acted as my mentors. A profound respect and admiration for their clinical abilities, their passion for their craft and their contributions had influenced my own motivations to pursue general surgery as a career.

There was a common thread among these men and women whom I was now succeeding. Generosity and altruism are amongst these core values. It is this unselfish attitude that is central to effective leadership. It is what one immediately sees in Morad Hameed, a true visionary who challenged our concepts of surgery through innovation and creativity. And in our immediate past president, thoughtful and eloquent David Urbach, who advanced our understanding of the importance of health services research, quality and the guiding principles of stewardship.

It's important to respect and understand our past, as it informs our present and future as we move forward.

But I realized that surgery represents more than one individual and it is above all a community. This is its enduring allure. And it occurred to me that then the strength of CAGS does not really

rely on its presidents at all. Identifying the value of collaborative leadership, is integral to our success. Helen Keller said, "alone we can do so little, together we can do so much". Herein lies our true strengths. Over the summer, I spoke to our committee chairs, and it was immediately clear how their work and ideas were moving forward our vision for Canadian Surgery.

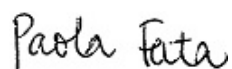
This year, CAGS will invest its efforts to protect endoscopy training for our residents and surgeons, helping to protect access to this vital resource for our patients. While sub-specialization may challenge the notion of what a general surgeon is, acute care surgery is something common to all of us. We need to continue to advocate for proper, timely access to surgical services for patients in remote areas of the country. Our commitment to research and quality elevates our standards for our patients and communities.

Providing robust educational resources for our surgeons and residents in maintaining and enhancing competence is also paramount. Residency training in surgery is transitioning to focus on competency-based education and with this, we look further to how we transition our residents into practice. CAGS is poised to take the lead in planning the surgical workforce strategically and responsibly while ensuring that we meet the needs of our population.

Throughout the last two years while serving on the board, I have focussed on broadening educational resources for our residents and practicing surgeons to add value for continuing professional development. The theme of how we acquire competency and expertise is especially important in surgical training this year as we implement new training methods dedicated to enhancing learning processes. This supports surgical skills and abilities to evolve throughout training and continue into practice.

The plans and projects we set out will hopefully continue to move things forward in a strategic way so that there are real results that benefit our members. But the direction CAGS needs to go in this year is actually really up to you, our robust, integrated network of surgeons across the country who with one voice, can ensure we continue to be purpose-driven to meet the challenges of our practice and the communities we serve. I am looking forward to accomplishing this together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paola Fata".

Dr. Paola Fata
CAGS President